



**Testimony  
Betsy Gara  
Executive Director  
Connecticut Council of Small Towns  
Before the Transportation Committee  
January 27, 2021**

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) supports **HB-5429 - AN ACT CONCERNING PEDESTRIAN SAFETY, VISION ZERO COUNCIL, SPEED LIMITS IN MUNICIPALITIES, FINES AND CHARGES FOR CERTAIN VIOLATIONS, THE GREENWAYS COMMEMORATIVE ACCOUNT AND MAINTENANCE WORK ZONE AND SCHOOL ZONE SAFETY ENFORCEMENT.**

In recent years, many small towns throughout Connecticut have undertaken efforts to revitalize main streets and downtowns to reinvigorate their local economies. In addition, to help local businesses operate in compliance with COVID-19 related restriction, municipalities supported efforts to allow restaurants to expand outdoor dining and take out options and encourage stores to provide curbside pick-up and hold sidewalk sales.

At the same time, recognizing the value in creating walkable, bikeable communities, towns are working hard to ensure that pedestrians and bicyclists can also enjoy these areas safely. HB-5429 includes measures which will help towns encourage more foot traffic on our main streets and downtowns and take steps to ensure the safety of citizens.

COST strongly supports provisions in the bill which would allow local traffic authorities to establish speed limits and pedestrian safety zones. Many towns are struggling to address excessive speeds in downtown areas, which is jeopardizing the safety of pedestrians and other motorists and undermining efforts to encourage people to shop and dine locally.

HB-5429 includes provisions which will require motorists to grant the right-of-way to pedestrians who affirmatively indicate their intention to cross the road in a crosswalk. COST recognizes that requiring motorists to grant the right-of-way to pedestrians in crosswalks will be helpful in protecting the public safety of pedestrians. If adopted, however, the state Department of Transportation should launch a public service campaign to make sure that motorists and pedestrians are aware of the change in law.

COST also supports provisions in HB-5429 to increase the fine for operating a motor vehicle while using a hand-held mobile telephone or electronic device and increase the additional fee provided to municipalities for certain traffic violations.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in support of HB-5429, which will benefit our communities and enhance our local economies by facilitating the development of safe walkable, livable, and bikeable downtowns and main streets.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments in support of HB-5429.